

(Not a response to "Whither FACC?", but useful) Perhaps to Resources as a manifesto?

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Date: Mon, Jun 10, 2019 at 11:15 AM

Subject: Re: Planning a strategy for targeted activism and outreach

I'd say that perhaps a division of labor might be useful. Divide tasks/goals into more manageable bite-size pieces. Then, identify individuals to form teams comprising those (they can be from different organizations) who have particular experience, skills (or a willingness to learn) to help meet a particular task/goal. All members can work together for larger pushes when needed. ATAG and ECA are already working this way to a large degree.

Goals/Tasks

1) **Identify and cultivate experts.** Retirees who have worked for EPA, VA DEQ, USACE, NPS or similar agencies and know the regulations and how they are being circumvented. (See also PEER: <https://www.peer.org>.) People who are working (or have worked) in engineering, construction and similar fields. Experts in the sciences and related technical fields (e.g., environmental economists). Experts in the legal field, including school law clinics and academic environmental programs at universities.

2) **Legislative - local gov.** Push local governments to alter their processes to pull in volunteers with environmental/construction/engineering expertise sooner. As one volunteer pointed out, there's not much room for change once a project has already been designed and the plans are on the table. The expense to the applicant is too great to make significant changes to existing designs. Involving volunteers who can "support" staff and offer expert advice early on to builders and developers could be key to steering the sled in a more positive direction. The localities must extend liability insurance/protection to their volunteers, and some sort of incentives to builders/developers could be needed to get them to work with volunteers first. Leverage every opportunity to have face time w/local elected officials but pre-plan your message/strategy — in Arlington, that's Open Door Mondays, at public meetings, and social and public events (fairs, festivals, etc.).

3) **Legislative/Regulatory - state gov.** Educate legislators (not just our local ones) on the fiscal and practical (e.g., public health) costs of putting the environment last. It's not just about knocking down trees. And the public at large (including state legislators and, seemingly, staff) are science illiterate. This is a major problem. Passing laws that have no teeth (or that staff or the courts subsequently refuse to enforce) is like having no regulation at all. Particularly when unworkable regulation is coming up for review, we need to submit cogent, well-considered comments and recommendations for change.

4) **Internal Communication.** Identify team members who can guide/coordinate the various efforts and keep the whole organization up to date on the organization's activities (so the right hand knows what the left hand is doing). This is more or less administrative/logistics. Develop mechanisms (like this list, for example) to share information that would be useful to other similar organizations in the region. Another idea would be a place where people could post documents, reports, etc., making these resources available to other groups on an as-needed basis.

5) **External Communications.** Develop mechanisms and identify team members who can keep websites and listservs up to date and pushing out information to the public and particularly to the organizations' members. Sending out information via email needs to be judicious to prevent volunteer/activist fatigue. Other alternatives to reach the public could include:

- Organizing speakers to speak during the public comment portion of public meetings (board of supervisors, city council, planning commission, urban forestry commission, etc.)
- Organizing letter-writing (email) campaigns and/or online surveys or petitions to prove that it's "not just a few people" who are raising objections. These campaigns should include well-defined, thoroughly researched and consistent recommendations or "asks." Don't let yourself be cast as simply a problem-identifier, offer solutions too!
- Work the comment sections of local/regional media outlets to disseminate fact-based information from reliable, third-party sources. Don't let the big lies go unaddressed/unchallenged. You reach a lot more eyeballs this way. (Washington Post, The Connection, Sun Gazette, ARLnow, etc. Here's Arlington's list

of media outlets: <https://newsroom.arlingtonva.us/local-media/>. In certain situations, it might also be useful to reach out to 7 on Your Side (e.g., when a citizen with an environmental problem (like flooding related to development on neighboring lot) can't get help from local gov.).

- Leverage social media where/as appropriate to hook in the younger audience. Materials must be short and to the point (a picture, graph might be useful) — this audience has a very short attention span — but posts can reference longer explanations and sources using links, such as video clips.

- Volunteer to speak at women's/men's groups, community organizations, schools, etc. Again, you'll need to plan your message (tailored to the audience at hand) ahead of time and bring appropriate materials to hand out to reinforce your message. I've assembled **a quick cheat-sheet** of Arlington's environmental problems (not comprehensive) with links. See attachment.

- Set up booths at fairs and festivals (if you can draft enough volunteers to staff them). Figure out a hook to draw visitors in. At the Arlington County Fair, ATAG put together a binder with photos recently deceased trees. People poured over it. Maps showing tree canopy percentages for various neighborhoods are popular. Look for low-cost or no-cost giveaway items from organizations like the Arbor Day Foundation or maybe The Nature Conservancy (Arlington) WWF (DC). (People love free stuff!) These organizations may not want to formally sponsor a booth, but they might be happy to have the exposure if you agree to hand out there materials. Be sure to provide educational information that people can read and/or take away. Hint: Arbor Day Foundation sells [low-cost tree seedlings](#) (bare root). These could be useful premium items. In your messages advertising the event, tell folks that the first 50 visitors to the booth can get a free tree.

- Sponsor/hold an environmental movie night or a book signing or a forum (with local experts populating the panel) to discuss problems and issues. Give the public time to ask questions and help brainstorm for solutions. You might be able to recruit more volunteers this way or discover people with useful professional expertise who might be willing to pitch in.

- Don't forget about your local public school science teachers (who might be willing to organize a classroom exercise or project that relates to local environmental issues). Some of the most pointed critique of Arlington's environmental problems have come from high school students participating in James Madison's GIS program: <http://aps-legacy.materiell.com/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/2281/Doyle.pdf> (ozone pollution in Arlington and vicinity) and https://www.isat.jmu.edu/geospatialsemester/11-12winners/LIVEZEY_Morgan.pdf (urban heat island effect in Arlington). Students also like to participate in science fairs and competitions, which means they might welcome materials and information. Then, there are the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts who need to earn those BADGES! Elected officials don't hesitate to brush off adults. But they have a really hard time brushing off requests from students.

- On an individual basis, reach out to your own local organizations and offer to hold educational workshops or whatever: houses of worship, Rotary Clubs, women's/men's clubs, garden clubs, etc. Sometimes people cannot commit to a more organized, formal effort. But everyone can do something.

- Put together a ready-made packet of helpful resources, information and advice/suggestion. We are all just volunteers and cannot work every single environmental problem that crops up. Having concrete information to pass along to all who seek help prevents these folks from going away empty-handed.

I'm sure that the people on this list can think of other/better suggestions. Too often, I think we may be overlooking the opportunities right in front of us. But you are right. Sharing accurate information and educating the public is key.

Suzanne